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*The Success of Arms depends
upon GOD'S PROVIDENCE.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

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DEAL-Chapel

AND

SUTTON in KENT,

On Wednesday Jan. 9. 17²⁰/₄₀.

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation
for a general FAST and Humiliation
before Almighty GOD, for obtaining
Pardon of our Sins, and imploring his
Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of
His MAJESTY.

By NICOLAS CARTER, D. D.
Curate of the said Chapel, &c.

L O N D O N:

Printed by E. CAVE at St. John's Gate. 1740.

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P S A L M XXXIII. 20, 21, 22.

*Our Soul waiteth for the Lord: He is
our Help and our Shield. For our
Heart shall rejoice in him; because
we have trusted in his holy Name.
Let thy Mercy, O Lord, be upon us,
according as we hope in thee.*



THE former Part of these Words is a Declaration of Trust and Confidence in God, arising, by way of Conclusion, from a just and affecting sense of his supreme and perpetual Government of the World: And the latter Part of them is a Petition for obtaining the divine Protection and Favour, in Proportion as such Trust and Confidence influence the Heart of those who make it.

The Introduction of this Psalm consists of repeated Exhortations to good Men, to celebrate the Praises of God, in a distinguished Manner. From thence the inspired Author proceeds to express the Reasons why

such Praises are due to God, and ought to be paid him. He first takes notice of the Rectitude and Goodness of his Nature, and then passes on to display these Characters together with his Power and Majesty, in his Works both of Creation and Providence. After this 'tis particularly remarked, that the Safety and Happiness of States and Kingdoms are to be ascribed to the divine Protection and Favour, and not to the Number, Strength, or Valour of the People. *There is no King saved by the Multitude of an Host: A mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength. A Horse is a vain thing for Safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great Strength,* ver. 16, 17. Next follow the Conditions upon which God's Assistance may be expected. *Behold, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy,* ver. 18. To which is subjoined, by way of Conclusion from the Whole, in the Words of the Text: *Our Soul waiteth for the Lord; He is our Help and our Shield: For our Heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his Holy Name. Let thy Mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we Hope in Thee.*

From these Words I design to Treat upon the *Four* following Propositions, as being, what I apprehend, suitable to the present Solemnity.

First,

First, That the Usefulness of Armies, and the Advantages which Nations procure over each Other, by means of War, depend originally, and in the strictest Sense, upon God's Providence. Hence,

Secondly, That no Kingdom or People, however superior they may imagine themselves to be, or they really are, in Policy, or Strength, or even in both, to their Enemies, ought to rely solely upon their own Abilities, or be elated with Notions, that Victory is at their own Disposal, and that they cannot fail to obtain it, whenever they think fit to have Recourse to Arms.

Thirdly, That therefore the Duty and Interest too of all Nations, in Seasons of publick War, is to place their chief Confidence in God, and to hope for a Blessing upon their Counsels and Arms, more from his Favour, than from their own Power. And,

Lastly, I shall consider in what manner this national Reliance upon God ought to be demonstrated, as a Ground of Encouragement to expect his Assistance.

The *First* Proposition is, That the Usefulness of Armies, and the Advantages which Nations procure over each other,
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by Means of War, depend originally, and in the strictest Sense, upon God's Providence.

There needs little Enlargement to establish this Truth. The Notion of God, as an absolutely perfect Being, infers his supreme Disposal of Events. Whatever concurring Circumstances produce Victory, those Circumstances are of his Appointment. That Prudence and Valour which give the Advantage even to a weaker Army, and that Misconduct and Fear which bring Defeat upon the Stronger, if traced to their Original, must be confessed to be the Effects of an invisible and almighty Power. And in general, wherever Victory inclines, the Ballance is always turned by the Hand of God, the supreme Arbiter. Upon this Account, one of the incommunicable Characters ascribed to him in Scripture is, That he is *the Lord of Hosts*, or God of Armies, *The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is his Name*, Jerem. xxxii. 18. *As I live, saith the King, whose Name is the Lord of Hosts*, xli. 18. And the Hymn used by our Church, in the Morning Service, celebrates him under the same Title; *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth*, that is, Lord God of Armies: For so the Word *Sabaoth* signifies,

And

And as the Reason of this Appellation is founded on God's supreme Dominion, so the end of it is to raise an awful and affecting Sense of this supreme Dominion in the Minds of Men. Armies are the most formidable Collections of human Power. The Force and Terror of them affect whole Nations. Whatever is esteemed dear, Estates, Liberties, Life, and All, are the common Prey of a conquering Host. And yet the most potent Armies are less able to resist the Omnipotence of God, than an helpless Infant is, to oppose their Devastations. He is therefore called the *Lord of Hosts*, to bring to our Mind an Instance of Power, which of all others is best fitted to excite our Reverence and Admiration.

And this Doctrine of God's supreme Dominion over Armies is much insisted upon in the divine Writings, and verified by many illustrious Examples. *Thine, O Lord, is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty: For all that is in the Heaven, and in the Earth is thine: Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all,* 1 Chron. xxix. 11. *It is God that giveth Victory to Kings, and delivereth his Servants from the hurtful Sword, Psalm cxliv. 19. Not by Army, nor by Power, but by my Spirit,*

nit, saith the Lord of Hosts, Zechariah iv. 6. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in Battle, Psal xxiv. 8. Who is the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory, ver. 10. Therefore the Flight shall perish from the Swift, and the Strong shall not strengthen his Force, neither shall the Mighty deliver himself; neither shall he stand that handleth the Bow, and he that is Swift of Foot shall not deliver himself, neither shall he that rideth the Horse, deliver himself; And he that is courageous among the Mighty, shall flee away naked, saith the Lord, Amos ii. 14, 15, 16.

It was upon this Principle that Jonathan and his Armour-bearer attacked a numerous Garison of the Philistines; And the Success of that Enterprize is an eminent Instance to confirm it. This pious Warrior said to the young Man that bare his Armour, Come, and let us go over to the Garison of these Uncircumcised; It may be that the Lord will work for us: For there is no Restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by Few, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. And the Event answered their Expectations; for they came off Conquerors, and slew of their Enemies ten Times their own Number.

The Defeat of the *Midianites* under the Conduct of *Gideon*, is another remarkable Proof, that Victory is not to be ascribed to the Arm of Flesh, but to the overruling Power of God. *The Lord said unto Gideon, The People that are with thee, are too many for me to give the Midianites into their Hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own Hand hath saved me,* Judges vii. 2. This too numerous Body was therefore reduced, by a peculiar Providence, to three Hundred; which handful of Men, crying out, *The Sword of the Lord and Gideon*, assaulted and vanquished an Host of *Midianites* and *Amalekites*, and all the Children of the East, who are said to have lain along in the Valley like Grasshoppers for Multitude; and that their Camels were without Number, as the Sand by the Seaside for Multitude, ver. 12.

I will mention only one Example more, recorded in Scripture, leaving the rest to your private Recollection. It is that of good King *Jehoshaphat*, who, upon the News of a mighty Army of Foreiners, coming to invade his Kingdom, set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah. His Prayer upon this Occasion began thus; O Lord God of our Fathers, art not thou God in Heaven? And rulest not thou over all the Kingdoms of the Heathen?

And in thine Hand is there not Power and Might, so that none is able to withstand thee? And concludes, O our God wilt not thou Judge our Enemies? For we have no Might against this great Company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do, but our Eyes are upon thee, 2 Chron. xx. 3, 6, 12. The Answer he received from God was this; Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat; Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great Multitude; For the Battle is not yours, but God's, ver. 15. And the Consequence was, that this vast, and formidable Army was totally overthrown; which surprizing Providence caused the Fear of God to fall upon all the Kingdoms of those Countries, when they had heard, that the Lord fought against the Enemies of Israel, ver. 29.

These are illustrious Demonstrations of the supreme Dominion of God, in disposing of Victory, according to his own Will, and not by the means of human Prudence or Power. 'Twas thus he fulfilled his Promise to his People. *Five of you shall chase an Hundred, and an Hundred of you shall put Ten-Thousand to Flight; And your Enemies shall fall before you by the Sword, Lev. xxvi. 8. And from hence we are taught,*
That

That it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in Man; It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in Princes, Psal. cxviii. 8, 9.

And this leads us to the *Second Proposition*, which contains, that no Kingdom or People, however superior they may imagine themselves to be, or they really are, in Policy or Strength, or even in both, to their Enemies, ought to rely solely upon their own Abilities, or be elated with Notions, that Victory is at their own Disposal, and that they cannot fail to obtain it, whenever they think fit to have Recourse to Arms.

If God be the uncontrollable Ruler of Armies; if the Greatest, as well as the Smallest, be alike under his absolute Disposal; if he can inspire Courage, and Wisdom into the Weakest, sufficient to confound the Strongest; if he *setteth up one, and pulleth down another*, not according to their apparent Circumstances, but agreeably to his own independent Will, and Pleasure: It is then the most intolerable Arrogance and Folly for any People, though the most powerful upon the Face of the whole Earth, to rely solely upon their own Abilities, and to flatter their Pride with the Notion, that it is impossible but that they with such su-

perior Forces, must come off Conquerors. The Maxim never to be departed from is, *That God is the only Giver of all Victory.* And if this Maxim be duly impressed upon the Mind, it will cause even the most Potent to expect Success to their Arms, more from the divine Assistance than from their own Abilities. *Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Shall the Ax boast it self against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the Saw magnify it self against him that shaketh it? As if the Rod should shake it self against them that lift it up? Or as if the Staff should lift up it self, as if it were no Wood, Isa. x. 15. Put not your trust in Princes, nor in the Son of Man, in whom there is no Help. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his Help, whose Hope is in the Lord his God, Psal. cxlvi. 3, 5.*

The Sin and Folly of Self-dependence ought more particularly to be insisted upon to a People, who imagine themselves to have the Advantage of their Enemies, in the visible Means of Victory. The Pride and Inattention of Men are so prevalent, that they are ever too ready to ascribe the Event of Things to second Causes only. They forget, especially when they themselves are the Instruments, what is due to God, the first and
supreme

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supreme Director, upon whom all second Causes absolutely depend. Their Thoughts are like those of the proud King of *Assyria*, who boasted, *By the Strength of my Hand I have done it, and by my Wisdom; For I am Prudent: I have removed the Bounds of the People, and have robbed their Treasures; I have put down the Inhabitants like a valiant Man*, Isa. x. 13. But God is a *King over the Children of Pride*, Job xli. 34. And the surest way for a People to render their superior Strength and Skill ineffectual, is to place a vain Confidence in their own Abilities, neglecting to acknowledge God's supreme Dominion, and humbly to seek for his Assistance. *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! How art thou cut down to the Ground! For thou hast said in thine Heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God*, Isai. xiv. 10, 11. Hence,.

Thirdly, It is the Duty, and Interest too of all Nations, in Seasons of publick War, to place their chief Confidence in God, and to hope for a Blessing upon their Counsels and Arms, more from his Favour, than from their own Power.

All States, in time of War, ought to
exert

exert every Advantage, they are possessed
 of, in order to subdue their Enemies. This
 justifies their Conduct in making the most
 powerful Preparations; and a different man-
 ner of acting would expose them to the Re-
 proaches of inexcusable Folly. God himself
 requires that they should use whatever Abili-
 ties he has put into their hands, and not tempt
 him, by expecting Victory, or Deliverance,
 from miraculous Interpositions of Providence
 if they wilfully neglect their own Endeavours.
 It would be Presumption for a Pi-
 lot to imagine that Providence would direct
 his Ship to its Harbour, without the Appli-
 cation of his own Skill; and it would be no
 less Presumption for him to depend that
 his own Skill, be it never so great, would
 carry it thither, without the Blessing of
 Providence. And when a People have got
 together even their utmost Forces, and ap-
 pear on that Account to be far more potent
 than their Enemies, yet they still should
 remember God, and implore his Favour:
 For destitute of this, their Strength is Weak-
 ness, their Glory is Shame, and their Suc-
 cess will be Deplorable. *Thus saith the*
Lord; Let not the wise Man glory in his
Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in
his Might, let not the rich Man glory in his
Riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in
the Lord, Jerem. ix. 23. 2 Cor. x. 17.

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I proceed to the *Last* Proposition, which is to consider in what manner this national Reliance upon God ought to be demonstrated, as a Ground of Encouragement to expect his Assistance.

Let it be observed, *First*, in general, that every reasonable dependance of receiving Assistance from God, includes in it a sincere Intention of Obedience to his Commands. To conform our Desires and Actions to the Dictates of Reason, and the Laws of Revelation, is the only sure way of purchasing his Favour. Is it not the most glaring Absurdity for a People who blaspheme his Name, oppose his Will, contradict his Precepts, and despise his Ordinances, to hope that he will espouse their Cause, and conduct it to an happy Issue? Can they choose a more certain Means of provoking his Resentment, and driving him to abandon their Counsels and Arms, and give them up to be a Prey to their Enemies? *Them that honour me, saith the Lord, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. How vain then would it be for a People to rely upon the Strength of their Armies, if their *Iniquities have separated between them and their God, and their Sins have caused him to hide his Face from them, that he will not hear?* Isa. lix. 2.

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To apply this to our selves. Let it be granted that we far exceed our present Enemies in all the apparent Means of Victory; that we have more Riches, truer Courage, superior Policy, stronger Fleets, and better Armies. Will these Things avail, if God *goeth not forth with our Hosts*? And if our Manners are generally corrupted, and all true sense of Religion extremely decayed among us, have we not Reason to fear, that God will refuse us his Countenance? Should we not take this Opportunity of considering our *Ways and our Doings*, (which God knows are bad enough) and be perswaded, as we desire the divine Favour, to correct and reform them? Will it not be esteemed a solemn Mockery, and therefore a sad Aggravation of our Guilt, to appear before the Lord with Fasting, and Prayers, under a Pretence of appeasing him, and then immediately return to our former Wickedness? Can we be so void of Discernment, as to think that such formal and hypocritical Services can please him, or obtain that Protection and Help which we have been asking of him, against our Enemies? We have acknowledged this Day, before the Lord, that *we are a sinful People, unfruitful under the means of Grace, and the Light we enjoy; overrun with Profaneness, Inidelity, Heresies, Schisms, gross Impurities, and other manifold Offences*; we have professed
too,

too, that *with broken and contrite Hearts we bewail these our Transgressions and Wretchedness*; And the doing all this, in the present solemn Manner implies a Promise of Repentance and Amendment. Will it not therefore be a most unpardonable Affront to God, if after all these Pretences of Humiliation and Contrition, we return to our usual Sins and Impieties? Shall we not then have just Ground to fear, that God will forsake us, as we have forsaken him, and give us up to the Will of our Enemies? Let us then seriously consider these Things, and resolve upon a better Practice. Let us, as the Prophet advises, *seek Good and not Evil, that we may live; And so the Lord, the God of Hosts shall be with us*, Amos v. 14.

But as *general Instructions* are less affecting, we should be advised to examine our Consciences very exactly, that we may discern what *particular Offences* we are blameable for, and be perswaded to set about, in good Earnest, to reform them.

Upon such a Scrutiny it will be found, *First*, That we are not either duly sensible of the *national Blessings* we enjoy, or are not enough thankful for them. God has for a great while past favoured us with more

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Liberty,

Liberty, more Riches, more Safety, and in general with more Prosperity, both in our temporal and spiritual Concerns, than perhaps any other Nation under the whole Heavens has experienced in the same Time. This cannot be denied by any who are capable, and willing to make the Comparison. And yet, what an amazing Spirit of Discontent and Ingratitude reigns among us? How many are there, who are for ever complaining of the Times, and think themselves ill dealt with, under the free and plentiful Enjoyments of Advantages, which the People of other Countries would esteem matters of the highest Happiness? Hence it is that they neglect all Thanks to God, and are perpetually exasperating themselves and others with restless Complaints, and Clamours, under Circumstances far better than they deserve, and which, if they had either Sense or Grace enough to relish them as they ought, would be a sufficient Ground of much Pleasure and Contentment. *Because,* says God to the ungrateful Jews, *thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness, and with Gladness of Heart, for the abundance of all Things; therefore shalt thou serve thine Enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in Hunger, and in Thirst, and in Nakedness, and in want of all Things,* Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. God grant that our
Discontent

Discontent and Unthankfulness may not provoke him to deprive us of the many and peculiar Blessings, by which he has distinguished us; And that he may not force us to learn their Value, and be made sensible of our Folly, and Ingratitude, by reducing us to the Want of them,

Secondly, Let it be observed, that this complaining and dissatisfied Temper, especially concerning political Advantages, leads us into another Fault; namely, Irreverence towards our Governours, through whom these Advantages are conveyed to us. Our Histories cannot furnish us with a Period, when the People of this Kingdom enjoyed so many Privileges, and Emoluments of Government, nor in so uninterrupted a Manner as they do at this very Instant. No Man is infringed in his Liberty; No Man injured in his Property; No Man disturbed in his lawful Trade; No Man restrained, but in such Cases only, as would be to the publick Detriment; No Man deprived of the Fruits of an honest Industry; No Man oppressed in Conscience. The Description of God's People has, for a long Time past, been justly applicable to us--- *And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every Man under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the Days of Solomon,*

Iomcn, 1 Kings iv. 25. And yet what a virulent, impudent, and wicked Current of Abuse, against those whom God has set over us, and by whose prudent, and mild Administration we partake of such inestimable Benefits, overflows among us? What multitudes are there who have neither Virtue enough to order their own Affairs with tolerable Decency, nor Capacity enough to be Judges even in the most easy Parts of Government, and are yet perpetually censuring, condemning, and reviling their Rulers, as if they themselves were both the best, and wisest of Men? How many who abound in Wealth, and Plenty, and Ease, and Security, and yet complain against their Governors, (to whom they owe the unmolested Possession of these Blessings,) perhaps in a more outrageous Manner, than if they were groaning under their Oppression? And how many who labour to possess the People with Notions of Hardships, Injuries, and Severities brought upon them by the present Government, when they themselves are a most notorious Proof against their own Accusation, by being let alone in Practices, which in most other Nations would draw upon them the severest Punishments?

These are the crying Sins of this Nation.
 We neither *fear God*, nor *honour the King*,
 we

we are alike unthankful both for the good Things we receive from Heaven, and from our Benefactors. Plenty, Peace, and Safety, have made us impious, licentious, and ungovernable; *of the Rock that begat us are we unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed us*, Deut. xxxii. 18. *Who say, with our Tongue will we prevail, our Lips are our own; who is Lord over us?* Psal. xii. 4. *Presumptuous are we, self-willed, and are not afraid to speak Evil of Dignities*, 2 Pet. ii. 10.

Thirdly, Let us survey our Behaviour in Matters of more private Concern. Can we imagine any Time, in which Profaneness, Impiety, Swearing, Drunkenness, Debauchery, Injustice, Lying, Railing, Malice, Uncharitableness, and want of Christian Affection, were followed in a more general, or more extravagant Manner? Does not every Conversation supply us with unexceptionable Instances, proving the Truth of this Charge? Are not Children trained up from their Infancy, by the Example and Encouragement of their Parents and Superiors to the Exercise of these Vices, and even to take Pleasure in boasting of their early Proficiency in them? And are not the Old seen to keep on in their Wickedness, without even a Shew of Reformation, tho' they feel themselves

themselves upon the Brink of Death, the inevitable Passage to Judgment, and Condemnation? Will the Uncharitable ever forgive? Will the Unjust turn honest? Will the Debauchee be reformed? Will Evil-speakers cease from defaming, or Lyars be reconciled to Truth? Will Swearers forbear to pollute the Name of God, or the Prophane, to ridicule his Worship? *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth; For the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me. Ah Sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of evil Doers; Children that are Corrupters; They have forsaken the Lord! The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint,* Isa. i. 2, &c.

Our State therefore has absolute need of Amendment. We must reform our Manners before we are allowed to hope that God will be our Protector, and Avenger. Let us then *break off our Sins by Righteousness, and our Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor,* Dan. iv. 27. Let us *rent our Hearts, and not our Garments, and turn unto the Lord our God,* Joel ii. 13. Let the *Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts,* Isa. lv. 7. Let us *esteem all Men, love the Brotherhood, fear God and honour the King,* 1 Pet. ii. 17. Let us be faithful
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and contented Subjects, honest and sober Men, kind and peaceable Neighbours, and sincere and pious Christians. Upon these Conditions we may humbly expect the Blessing of God upon our Arms.

Finally, let us *lift up our Eyes unto Heaven,—and bless the most High, and praise and honour him that liveth for ever, whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and his Kingdom from Generation to Generation; in Comparison of whom all the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as Nothing; who doeth according to his will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth: And none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, what dost thou? Dan. iv. 34, 35. Let us call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall we be safe from our Enemies. For the Lord redeemeth the Soul of his Servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate, Psal. xxxiv. 22.*

Now unto the King eternal immortal, invisible, the only wise God be Honour and Glory for Ever and Ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

